

Military families and Operational Security



Introduction

Family members are vital to the success of our military.

You may not know it, but you play a crucial role in ensuring our servicemembers' safety just by what you know of the military's day-to-day operations.

You can protect your loved ones by protecting the what you know. This is known as Operational Security or, OPSEC.

OPSEC is...

... keeping potential adversaries from discovering our critical information.

As the name suggests, OPSEC protects our operations - planned, in progress or completed.

Our success often depends on secrecy and surprise, so our enemies want to know what our servicemembers and family members know.

OPSEC teaches you to:

- **Look at your daily activities from an enemy's point of view**
- **Understand what an enemy might know about you and your family**
- **Assess risks to you and your family**
- **Develop and apply countermeasures -- ways of preventing enemies from gaining your sensitive information**

Limit what you say about...

- **Military movements: deployment or redeployment dates, dates of field exercises, flight information, etc. (“Next Tuesday” IS a specific date)**
- **Any issues with the unit**
- **Anything related to security**
- **Equipment issues**
- **Locations of units (It’s OK to say, “They’re in Iraq,” but not to say, “Jim’s unit is at 14th and Ramadan in Kadamiyah.”)**

***Don't talk about operations in
any place where someone you
don't know could be listening!***

That includes:

- **Clubs/bars**
- **Restaurants**
- **Gyms**
- **Shopping**
- **Public transportation**

The 'Don'ts' of OPSEC

Don't:

- Discuss future destinations
- Discuss future operations or missions
- Discuss dates and times of exercises
- Discuss readiness issues or numbers
- Discuss specific training equipment
- Discuss people's names and locations in conjunction with operations
- Speculate about future operations
- Spread rumors about operations
- Assume the enemy is **not** trying to collect information on military operations or your family

***OPSEC measures you
should practice daily:***

- **Be aware of your surroundings**
- **Keep sensitive discussions in designated secure areas**
- **Keep a “need to know attitude”
(If they don’t need to know,
don’t tell them)**
- **Safeguard sensitive but
unclassified information**

A few OPSEC terms

- **Critical Information** - Specific facts about yourself and our military intentions, capabilities, operations or activities
- **Indicators** - Any activity that seems innocent but could point to critical information
- **Vulnerability** - A weakness that someone can use to get critical information
- **Risk** - The probability that someone will gain critical information, and the damage that could be caused if they are successful
- **Countermeasures** - Things you can do to stop others from learning critical information

Examples of critical information

- **Detailed information about missions of assigned units**
- **Details concerning locations and times of unit deployments**
- **Personal transactions that occur in large numbers (pay information, powers of attorney, wills and deployment information)**
- **References to trends in unit morale**
- **Personnel problems**
- **Details concerning security procedures**

Some examples of indicators

- **An increase in field exercises**
- **Large troop movements**
- **Ceremonies**
- **Large number of wills and power of attorneys being processed**
- **Increase in financial activity**
- **Tightened security**
- **Lots being prepared for long-term storage of privately owned vehicles**

Some examples of vulnerabilities

An enemy can gather information by:

Physically observing daily activities such as driving children to school or shopping

Listening to phone conversations

Monitoring Internet activities

Some examples of risk

If an adversary found out flight dates and times for servicemembers deploying overseas, could he use that information against them?

If an enemy knew when and where your kids went to school, could he use that against you to gain any information you might know?

Countermeasures

- **Varying your routes to work, school, etc.**
- **Varying your schedule (shop for groceries on Wednesday this week and Saturday next week)**
- **Vary the times of your daily activities (jogging, shopping, going to the gym)**
- **Destroy trash that has your personal information on it**
- **Keep valuable documents and personal information in a safe or lock box**

Personal web sites

Do you have a personal web site that includes:

Information strangers shouldn't know about your spouse's job?

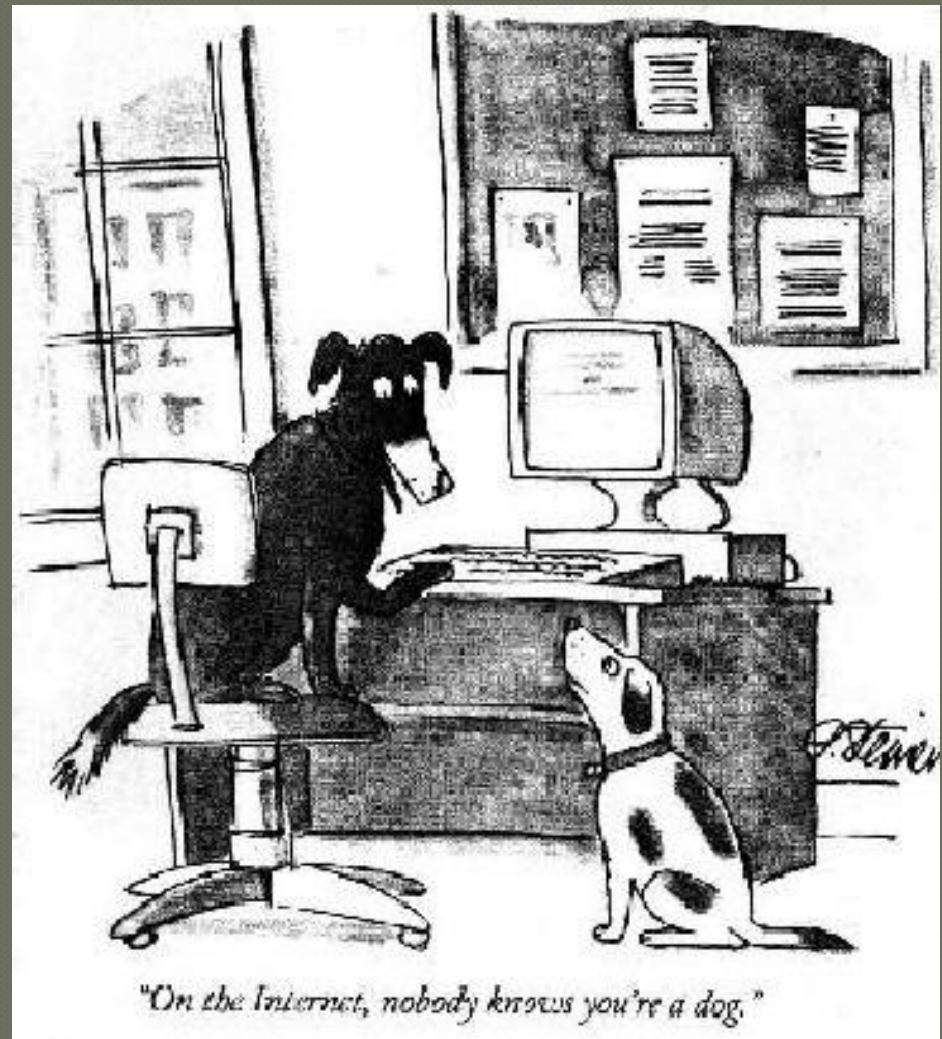
Personal information on your family?

Do you have links to your personal site from other forums and sites you frequent?

Online OPSEC

- **Do not discuss sensitive information in**
 - **E-mail**
 - **Chat rooms or instant messaging**
 - **Blogs**
- **Avoid posting excessive information such as:**
 - **When spouse deploys**
 - **Family members' full names, ages or where they attend school**
 - **Your address**
 - **Rank and unit affiliation**
 - **Servicemembers' deployed addresses**
- **When posting photos, remember that a picture is worth a thousand words**

Remember
:
AnyTHING
put on the
Internet
is available
to anyONE
on the
Internet!



Friends and Family

Do your friends and family who are not familiar with the military understand the importance of not revealing what you tell them?

Are you sure?

Talking with those close to you about your spouse's activities is a good idea. Not sharing all the details is an even better idea.

Telephones

Simply put, they're **not** secure. Cell phones, cordless phones and 'land lines' can all be compromised. Be careful what you discuss on the phone -- you never know who could be listening!

Out and About

Be careful what you talk about in public. You really don't know if the person next to you is friendly or not.

- **The cashier at the grocery store**
- **Your spotter at the gym**
- **One of your neighbors**
- **The person sitting behind you on the bus**

You NEVER know!

Don't advertise that your spouse is deployed and you are alone.

Showing the pride you have for your spouse can also show that you are home alone and make you a target.

- **Hang Blue Star flags or yellow ribbons inside the house, not on your front door or in a window**
- **If you hang yellow ribbons outdoors, hang them in a public place if possible, so your home won't be targeted**

Conclusion

The information in this presentation is not intended to make you paranoid or suspicious that everyone you meet is a spy or terrorist.

But stay alert ... if a stranger shows excessive interest in the affairs of your family members, military or not, please notify the proper authorities.